

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A measuring tape comprising:  
a first shaft;  
a spool and a first sheave turnable together about said first shaft;  
an elongate flexible blade having a free end and a terminal end, the free end adapted to extend out of a housing, said blade wound upon said spool when in a fully retracted position on said spool;  
a second shaft;  
a spiral spring assembly and a second sheave turnable together about said second shaft, said spiral spring assembly including a spring housing and a spirally wound spring, the spirally wound spring wound around the second shaft and contained within the spring housing so as to wind and unwind about said second shaft as said spring housing and said second sheave turn; and  
a belt connecting said first sheave and said second sheave, whereby extension of said blade from its retracted position causes turning of said spool which in turn causes turning of said spring assembly to place the spring of said spring assembly in a spring-wound condition which spring will cause retraction of said blade upon release of said blade from an extended position.

2. (currently amended) A measuring tape as defined in Claim 1 further comprising [[a]] the housing [[for]] enclosing said spool, said first sheave, said blade, said spring assembly, said second sheave, and said belt, said housing having a top, bottom sides, and ends with said elongate flexible blade having said free end adapted to extend out of said housing, the free end including a fixture adapted to be grasped by a user so as to extend said blade from its extracted position substantially inside said housing.

3. (previously presented) A measuring tape as defined in Claim 2 wherein said housing includes at least two spaced apart inwardly facing side wall surfaces defining a hollow interior of said housing, wherein the side wall surfaces are substantially flat.

4. (previously presented) A measuring tape as defined in Claim 1 including distance measuring indicia imprinted on said elongate flexible blade.

5. (cancelled)

6. (previously presented) A measuring tape as defined in Claim 1 wherein the spring of said spring assembly includes a bias which increases in proportion to the extent of said flexible blade caused to be paid off of said spool.

7. (previously presented) A measuring tape as defined in Claim 1 including hand and finger contoured pads secured to an exterior surface of the housing.

8. (currently amended) A measuring tape as defined in Claim 1 wherein ~~[[a]]~~ the free end of said elongate blade includes a bracket which militates against the passage of the free end into ~~[[a]]~~ the housing.

9. (currently amended) A measuring tape comprising:

a first shaft;

a spool and a first sheave turnable together about said first shaft;

an elongate flexible blade having a free end and a terminal end, the free end adapted to extend out of a measuring tape housing, said blade wound upon said spool when in a fully retracted position on said spool;

a second shaft;

a spiral spring assembly including a spring housing, a bearing assembly, and a spirally wound spring, the spring housing coupled to a second sheave and turnable together about said second shaft on said bearing assembly, the spirally wound spring having a first end and a second end, the first end secured to the second shaft and the second end secured to the spring housing, the spirally wound spring wound around the second shaft and contained within the spring housing so as to wind and unwind about said second shaft as said spring housing and second sheave ~~turns~~ turn; and

a belt connecting said first sheave and said second sheave, whereby extension of said blade from its retracted position causes turning of said spool which in turn causes turning of said spring assembly to place the spring of said spring assembly in a spring-wound condition which spring will cause retraction of said blade upon release of said blade from an extended position.

10. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim [[10]] 9, wherein the first shaft is a first stub shaft having the spool rotatably mounted thereon, the first shaft integrally formed with the measuring tape housing.

11. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[10]]~~ 9, wherein the second shaft is a non-rotating shaft having one of a split and a slotted portion to which the first end of the spirally wound spring is secured.

12. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[10]]~~ 9, wherein the bearing assembly is mounted on a boss integrally formed with the measuring tape housing.

13. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[13]]~~ 12, wherein a portion of the second shaft is disposed within the boss.

14. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[10]]~~ 9, wherein the bearing assembly includes a plurality of ball bearings.

15. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[10]]~~ 9, further including a sliding brake mechanism with a manually operable slide having a brake pad mounted at one end thereof, the sliding mechanism mounted to the measuring tape housing.

16. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[10]]~~ 9, wherein the spring housing includes a cup portion for containing the spirally wound spring, the cup portion having a lip surrounding an open end of the cup portion and formed therein.

17. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[17]]~~ 16, wherein the spring housing includes a lid portion that cooperates with the lip of the cup portion to seal the spirally wound spring inside the spring housing.

18. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[18]]~~ 17, wherein the cup portion and the lid portion have apertures formed therein through which the second shaft is disposed.

19. (currently amended) The measuring tape of Claim ~~[[10]]~~ 9, wherein the first shaft is a first stub shaft with the spool rotatably mounted thereon, the first shaft secured to the measuring tape housing; wherein the second shaft is a non-rotating split shaft having one of a split and a slotted portion to which the first end of the spirally wound spring is disposed; wherein the bearing assembly is mounted on a boss integrally formed with the measuring tape housing; and wherein a portion of the second shaft is disposed within the boss.

20. (cancelled)